

GAC Chosco

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May 26, 1966

Mr. Hamilton Fish Armstrong
Editor
FOREIGN AFFAIRS
58 East 68th Street
New York, New York

Dear Mr. Armstrong:

Thank you very much for your letter of 13 May. I read it and its attachments with considerable interest and very much appreciate your attitude on this whole business. I have no objection to your quoting my comments "in appropriate circumstances" if you wish to do so.

With regard to the criticism voiced by Mr. McDermott of "Viet Report", I shall send you a blind memorandum on the factual matters involved as soon as I return from vacation. (Ruth and I are leaving for the Outer Banks for about ten days to get away from children, suburbia, and all problems related to Vietnam. I shall be back in the office on the 6th of June.) In general, if these are the most trenchant criticisms a hostile reader can make, I feel I am on pretty solid ground.

With regard to refugees, I will pull together the exact statistics, or at least the best available. I am certain, however, that the 120,000-odd French Union troops repatriated are not included in the 860,000 civilian refugee figure, though some of their dependents probably are. Mr. McDermott misses the point that even if his figures are correct -- which they aren't -- it was still the case that over 700,000 persons fled North Vietnam (a country which then had a population of about 12 million) to avoid living under Ho Chi Minh's regime.

As for paragraph 7 of the Final Declaration, all I can do is cite its text in its entirety. There can be little dispute over the actual words. Mr. McDermott and I obviously disagree with regard to the precision of their meaning. On the regrouped Viet Minh, no one really knows the exact figure. I have seen totals ranging from around 50,000 to 120,000. My

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75,000 figure was an educated guess and not offered as a head count. As you indicate in your letter, the Communists seem to be playing down the NLF and hence its officers, including Huynh Tan Phat, and not too much in the news. If Mr. McDermott has proof that Phat has been replaced, he has access to information that has not crossed my desk. Phat certainly was the Secretary-General at the time I wrote my manuscript in February. He was also referred to as such in a 2 May 1966 broadcast of the Front's "Liberation Radio".

I do not agree that I made uncritical use of exceptionally unreliable evidence, and would certainly take issue with the specifications Mr. McDermott attaches to this general charge. The weapons cache figure (3,561) was taken from the GVN White Paper and was based on its protests to the ICC. It is true that the Polish member of the Commission, with support from the Indians, tried to denigrate the GVN's claim. It is also true, however, that the departing Viet Minh cached more weapons than the GVN ever found. My use of the 3,561 figure was intended as an order of magnitude illustration, not a definitive count.

As for the quotation which prefacing the article, I was particularly careful with this one since I knew it would be attacked. The GVN has used it to illustrate the same point I was trying to make. The GVN, however, sourced it to a Moscow interview and identified it as being (initially) published in the Belgian paper Le Drapeau Rouge. I discovered that this was not correct. As indicated in my article, the remark was made in Hanoi (not Moscow) to two correspondents of Unita and first published in Unita on 1 July 1959. Since the remark was reported by two Communist correspondents in a Communist paper and has never been denied by Hanoi, I see no reason to question its authenticity.

With regard to my "conspiratorial theory of history", I subscribe to no such general theory. It is a matter of fact and record that the Communist movement in Vietnam has engaged in conspiratorial activities from its inception as a clandestine revolutionary organization. It is also a fact that of the eleven present members of the North Vietnamese Lao Dong Politburo, eight are charter members of the Indochinese Communist Party and the other three joined the party within the first few years of its existence.

I realize that the "intellectually honest dispute" clause is a trifle prickly. It comes, however, at the end of a paragraph and, for that matter, at the end of a sentence which stresses the complexity of the Vietnamese

problem and the fallibility of confident assertion on many of its aspects. Nevertheless, I do believe that the particular points cited in my concluding three paragraphs are not open to intellectually honest dispute among those willing to recognize and accept facts as facts.

Your general letter of response to complaining critics strikes me as admirable. It argues my case much more effectively than I could.

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Thank you again not only for your letter but for all the help you have given me.

With warmest regards,

Yours sincerely,

George A. Carver, Jr.